



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

NED LAMONT
GOVERNOR

MIRIAM DELPHIN-RITTMON, PH.D.
COMMISSIONER

Testimony by Miriam Delphin-Rittmon
Commissioner
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Before the Public Health Committee

Good Morning Senator Abrams and Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. 5020 An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Regarding Public Health. I would like to specifically address Sections 1 to 6 of the bill.

DMHAS is a health care agency with a charge that includes substance use prevention across the lifespan. The DMHAS Tobacco Prevention and Enforcement Program works with communities to inform retailers and the public about laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco to minors and supports prevention through compliance inspections, education and awareness. The Program also works with the US Food and Drug Administration on tobacco-related compliance.

Adolescent brains are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine and nicotine addiction. Studies show nicotine has a detrimental effect on the adolescent brain, altering normal development that can impact that person for the rest of their life. Ninety percent of adult smokers started smoking before the age of 18 years old. Limiting access to nicotine will reduce nicotine addiction and related health problems.

H.B. 5020 prohibits the sale of any electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS) or vapor products that are flavored with a flavor other than tobacco, or with nicotine content greater than 35 milligrams per milliliter. The law requires retail establishments to show evidence of compliance with the nicotine limits to DMHAS inspectors upon request. DMHAS inspectors will conduct unannounced checks on registered ENDS dealers to determine compliance with the ban on flavors. The Department of Revenue Services may conduct enforcement activities including requiring the successful completion of an online prevention education program administered by DMHAS, assessing financial penalties and directing the Department of Consumer Protection to suspend or revoke the dealer's registration upon DMHAS referral of non-compliant retailers.

The Department respectfully requests one small change in the bill to correct an inadvertent drafting error. Section 3 as currently drafted fines the violator for a first offense for selling a banned vaping product. The intent of this section was for the violator to be afforded the opportunity to take the DMHAS online prevention education program rather than pay a fine. DMHAS is available to work with the committee on substitute language as needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this testimony.